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527 796 These are the festivals that have retained the most significance for the Chinese farmer into modern times. Many of them have changed drastically through time, and we shall shortly see that the Chinese Communists are greatly altering the meaning and symbolism of those few which have been allowed to survive.

585 In addition to the annual festivals, the farmer's life of toil may be relieved by ceremonial family events. For a family with resources or the ability to borrow them, a wedding meant a great feast and ample wine; even the poorest families often went heavily into debt to make a marriage ceremony festive. Practical jokes were played on the bridegroom, traditional songs were sung, and the guests, particularly the men, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.[10] The births of male children were often celebrated as were the betrothals and other milestones of family and individual life.

527 In modern times the government of the Republic of China decreed certain national holidays, but these were little observed by the farm villages.

•536 In addition to these occasions for

10. For a description of wedding celebrations in Yunnan in the 1940's cf. Hsü, op. cit., pp. 93-98.

536 relaxation, special events added interest and variety to the routine of village life. Itinerant dramatic troupes occasionally performed, and until very recently the storyteller frequently appeared on the village streets to spin his 622 tales to an impromptu audience. The election of a village headman often involved political maneuvering and a town meeting. Pilgrimages 796 to famous mountains or shrines were often undertaken in the slack agricultural season for religious reasons or purely for relaxation. 521 Perhaps the most universal reaction was, as in all illiterate communities, gossip and desultory conversation. Francis Hsü describes the recreation pattern in a small Yunnan town:

> In the evening, many shop doors may be found open to welcome neighbors and friends who care to come into the brightly lighted interior for a chat, and little clusters of men stand or squat near some street corner, often near a food stand.... The topics discussed at these gatherings range from rumors about national affairs and market prices to local rights and wrongs.[11]

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11. Hsü, op. cit., p. 25.

668 involved in a community work project directed by the local cadre.

668 527 Settlement of accounts before the New Year holiday now means payment of taxes and the sale to the government of most of the balance of the farmer's grain, for which he receives coupons. The cadres carry this out at the village level.[22] The New Year festival itself is characterized by some traditional activities, modified to promote government aims, and by some new features. The peasant may buy New Year's pictures to decorate his house, but they will probably be romanticized portraits of Mao and other Communist heroes rather than the colorful deities of former days.[23] He may decorate his gate with paired mottoes, but the mottoes will no longer carry the old wishes for long life, happiness, and wealth, but exhortations to conform to Communist [525] standards.[24] The government may allow some additional food for the season, but gambling is forbidden, and social life has been so thoroughly organized that it can no longer be restricted to family and friends. 668 536 The peasants have been urged to organize their

22. SCMP 979, F b. 2, 1955, p. 30.

23. Enlightenment Daily, Jan. 23, 1955, p. 2.

24. Cf. the collection of mottoes in Hua-nan T'ung-shu [South China Almanac], Canton, 1953, p. 32.

668 own dramatic troupes to play the approved
536 repertoire, now brought to villages by traveling troupes. Special mobile teams
668 trained to deliver organized "cultural lectures"
208 or to show films dramatizing the "New Order" have been moving through the countryside. The old exchange of visits with relatives in nearby towns now has its Communist counterpart: interchange of visits between urban and rural workers' groups to observe one another's "progress in Communist reconstruction."[25]

668 The seasonal pilgrimage, in company, to some famous shrine also has its Communist counterpart: mass pilgrimages to Mao Tse-tung's native village, which is being publicized as a national shrine.[26] Despite its frontal attack on the old familism, the Communist government last year provided special trains to take city dwellers back to their native villages for the holiday; a mass exodus was reported from Peking.[27]

796 Ch'ing-ming is no longer an approved
668 festival, presumably because of its function

25. Enlightenment Daily, Jan. 23, 1955, p. 2.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. Also, SCMP, 972, 1954, p. 21. We have no data on this for the Southwest.

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563 3. The exchange of literatures of the Han Chinese and the ethnic minorities.[21]

Although history in the Southwest is often interpreted by the Chinese Communists as antagonism between groups or suppression of one group by another, the literatures of the minorities that are to be developed are not allowed to take anti-administration forms.

F. Drama

• 536 Stage plays in China can be roughly divided into four kinds: (1) folk plays native to small dialectal districts, (2) ching-hsi, or p'i-huang (Peking opera) which is appreciated in all parts of China proper, but particularly in Peking, Tientsin,

20. Most of the literature of the minority groups take the form of poetry. The following are representative: Yung Ying, "We Are a Group of Miao-chia," People's Literature, January 1, 1952, pp. 61-62; Fan Jung-k'ang, "Song of the Miao-chia," ibid., pp. 63-64; Chu Yeh, "The Yi and the Ni-su of the Highlands," ibid., pp. 53-60; Miao Yen-hsiu, Ta-miao-shan Symphony, Shanghai, Hsin wen-i ch'u-pa she, 1954; and "Ah-shih-ma," a long poem transmitted orally by a Southwest minority group and now rendered into Han Chinese language by HuangTi, People's Literature, May 7, 1954.

21. This, before minorities have their own written language, amounts to sinicization of minorit people with Chinese litera t ure in ways which do not seem "imperialistic" to minority peoples. On the other hand, cultural heritages of the Chinese people may be enriched by the assimilation of cultures of minority groups through literature.

and Shanghai, and in the big cities of the Southwest, (3) the new opera, a genre created by the Chinese Communists, and (4) the modern plays. These, together with motion pictures, are now utilized by the Communists to disseminate ideological and political messages

1. The folk plays. The best-known folk play in the Southwest is Ch'uan-hsi. The difference between Ch'uan-hsi and other Southwestern folk plays is mostly due to the difference in the dialects employed. All the folk plays borrow stories from each other, and therefore the same folk stories in the Southwest are presented in different versions in different folk plays.

Ch'uan-hsi resembles ching-hsi in stage-setting and costuming. But Ch'uan-hsi uses percussion more extensively than ching-hsi; at the end of each verse the percussion helps to heighten the mood, and the musicians themselves also chant the sound of the last syllable of the sung verse of the actor on the stage. This practice is called pang-ch'iang. Also, in Ch'uan-hsi there are choral arrangements which are absent in ching-hsi.

With the large influx of people from other parts of China into the Southwest during the war against Japan, ching-hsi has become more popular than Ch'uan-hsi in the larger Southwestern cities. But in the small towns and in rural areas Ch'uan-hsi and other types of folk plays are still the common means of entertainment.

536 2. Ching-hsi. A composite of many regional plays, ching-hsi is popular in all parts of China. The best actors and actresses of ching-hsi, however, have been those associated with the Peking theaters. Because of their wealth, some of the larger Southwestern cities have been able to invite to their theaters the best actors and actresses from North China. The musical accompaniment is carried by the hu-ch'in, a string instrument, assisted by other strings and by wood-winds. Percussion is used to accentuate rhythms of body movements and to dramatize heightened moments.

At its present state, ching-hsi is a polished form of art. It no longer depends for audience appeal on plotting but rather on a display of skill by the actors or actresses. It emphasizes costuming rather than scenery. Actors may play the female roles and actresses may play the male roles. The music pattern is not very flexible, but permits the well-known actors and actresses to vary the style of production. The spoken dialogue and the spoken patter songs, consisting of clichés in colloquial language, help the movement of the play, make the literary language of the sung verses more intelligible to the audience, and aid in the variation of rhythm. However, most of the spectators know the play, have memorized the verses, and can sing some of them. They came to the theatre to watch and enjoy the art of a stylized performance.

In comparison with the folk plays, the ching-hsi is a much more integrated art. Therefore, it is more difficult to bring innovations to the ching-hsi without damaging its accepted form; in contrast,

536 the folk plays may easily incorporate new elements. This fact accounts for the Communists' effort to revamp the folk plays and to bring them up to the same level of popular and artistic recognition as the ching-hsi. However, in the Communists' effort to reinterpret history, the ching-hsi is now rendering unique service. The Communists have not only revised many of the old scripts to conform to their ideology, but have also encouraged the writing of new scripts. In this attempt, well-known actors like Mei Lan-fang and Ch'eng Yen-ch'iu are asked to lend a helping hand.

Playwrights in Communist China are now told to study ching-hsi, because this form can be used to dramatize personalities. In the Communists' efforts to glorify the image of the "new heroes," this art is considered extremely important.

545 3. The new opera. The new opera in China is modeled after the operatic forms of the West but the content conveys revolutionary themes. The first experiment in this form was The White-Haired Girl (1944), a collective creation of the writers and artists of the Lu Hsün Institute of Literature and Art. In the arias sung by the heroine, the musical pattern of the Hopei pang-tzu is borrowed to convey her changing moods. This is considered a very successful adaptation by the Communists. But the melodies of the other sung parts, which appear to be of yang-ko origin, are close to folk songs and lack dramatic effect. The White-haired Girl has been characterized as "drama-plus-songs," a term which indicates that the operatic form is not well enough developed to enable the music to carry the theme.

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536 4. Modern plays (hua-chü). The modern play, like the motion picture, has no regional character. Any acceptable play will be staged in all parts of China, and kuo-yü (the national language) is used rather than the various dialects. Ch'en Ch'i-t'ung's Thousands of Rivers and Mountains proves that the Communists' Long March in the thirties is always "correct" material for dramatization. The Song of the Red Flags, concerned with production drives in a textile factory in North China, was the joint creation of three playwrights, written after they had agreed on the ideological significance of this type of play and had sketched out the plot under the guidance of Chou Yang, the vice-minister of Cultural Affairs. The Song of the Red Flags was performed in Chungking as well as in other cities like Shanghai, Nanking, Peking, and Lan-chou. In Shanghai alone, it was given 159 performances, and some 125,000 people attended it.[22] If we take into account the fact that theater-going is now an organized activity of the various mass organizations such as the labor unions, the Women's Federation, the New Democratic Youth Corps, the Young Pioneers, and the study circles, the length of the run and the size of the audience do not accurately reflect the enthusiasm of the people but rather the effectiveness of the Communist organization of mass participation in the field of recreation.

546 5. Motion Pictures. Although Peking decides the policy, Shanghai and Mukden are now the centers of China's motion picture industry. The White-haired Girl, based on the same incident

22. Jen-min Hua-pao [People's Pictorial], Peking, July 1950.

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## IV. STAGE AND SCREEN

536 The stage and screen are effective media for bringing messages to the illiterate and semi-literate. The Communists realize this and have been fully exploiting the possibilities of both forms of mass communication.

### A. Stage

#### 1. Control

The main goal of the Communist control of the stage is the consolidation of existing facilities and indoctrination of existing personnel. This has been pursued by officials in charge of dramatics in Southwest China since 1950. The system of control starts with both professional and amateur dramatic groups. Professional actors, playwrights, and stage workers have their respective associations under the direction of a provincial federation. In larger cities, artists are organized in a similar manner. Amateur dramatic groups are encouraged and aided by the association to which they belong. Before the abolition of the Greater Regional Governments, the provincial federation took orders from regional authorities, but now it works with provincial Party propaganda agencies and receives direction from the Cultural and Information administrations under the State Council in Peking. The central Drama Reform Bureau under the Cultural Administration directly and exclusively interprets the broad policies laid

536 down by the Party. Its interpretation is passed down through a chain of control to the region, where the Cultural and Educational Commission puts it into practice.

2. Development

To expand stage activities, the Cultural and Educational Commission of this region has been promoting the organization of dramatic groups and encouraging professional actors to join the latter. By September 1952, about 50,000 stage workers were registered and 158 troupes organized.[54] The department of dramatics in the Southwest People's College of Arts was the center of the new drama movement until January 1, 1953 when the department was combined with the Experimental Drama Society to form the Southwest People's Art and Drama Academy, which now is playing a leading role in dramatics in Southwest China. When academy was founded, Li Ch'ang-lu, vice-chairman of the Cultural and Educational Commission, exhorted the members of the academy to "study the thoughts and theories of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung." In addition, they were told to retain "the cultural heritage" of the people of Southwest China so that local color and characteristics of southwestern drama could be preserved and further developed.[55] Li sounded

54. New China Daily, Chungking, September 30, 1952, p. 3.

55. New China Daily, Chungking, Jan. 3, 1953, p. 3.

536 the keynote for the future development of drama in this region.

Scattered statistics indicate that the development of dramatics in this region had an enthusiastic start in 1950. In the city of Chungking alone, more than ten "revised traditional operas" were staged in the first half of 1950, with a total audience of about 200,000. The official plan called for revision of 60 old scripts during the remainder of that year.[56]

The traditional Szechwan opera, differing from Peking opera in musical and lyrical styles, drew national attention when in September 1952 a selected group of actors visited Peking and participated in the national dramatic exhibition. Veteran Szechwan opera singers such as Chia P'ei-chih returned from Peking after the exhibition performance beaming with pride and optimism because he was among those who received awards. He published in the New China Daily his observations on the future of Szechwan opera as follows: (a) the People's Government was definitely supporting and helping traditional Szechwan opera and its actors; (b) in the past "feudalistic" influences and "reactionary" suppression caused the opera to distort its true beauty and deal with superstitious elements, but now the time had come to remove these stumbling blocks so that the laboring masses and their heroes could be naturally represented; (c) the success scored in Peking in September 1952 by Szechwan opera was made possible by the fact that the works performed had been revised in accordance with the new principle

56. Compendium of Gov't Reports, p. 1002.

536 of dramatic arts.[57] The remarks of this old actor, with over twenty years of stage experience in Southwest China, point out clearly the direction in which local traditional drama is to be developed.

The non-musical stage-play was quite popular in Southwest China during the War of Resistance against Japan. Possibly because of their political ideas such plays are no longer popular. In January 1953, only one play -- "Confronting New Things and People" -- was advertised in Chungking. New variety shows dealing with short subjects such as "Sing for the Erh-lang Mountain," and "Kill the American Wolf," are performed more often than plays. Many familiar traditional Szechwan operas have been performed, but undoubtedly they have been revised by the Communists. This situation is different from that in North or East China, where the non-musical stage-play continued to hold the interest of the stage as late as 1953.

533 Song and dance are extensively used both on and off the stage. Their versatility as media of information and propaganda has long been recognized by the Communists. As early as 1950, the 700 musicians in Chungking were organized into groups, and by July of that year had already been to 106 factories to teach the workers to sing "new" songs.[58] Music and dance

57. New China Daily, Chungking, January 27, 1953, p. 3.

58. Compendium of Gov't Reports, p.1002.